

“So, you want me to read for my degree?”: a Universal Design for Learning approach to reading

UKSG webinar

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Today

- Where did this research come from?
- Theoretical background – what is UDL?
- The practical solution – accessibility tools in Resource Lists (Talis Aspire)
- Research with staff and students
- Implications for teachers, librarians and publishers/vendors



Some of our assumptions

Students don't read

Students don't understand the need to read / are surprised they need to read

Students prefer print books



So, you want me to read for my degree?

Joliffe and Harl (2008) highlighted 12 years ago that patterns of students' reading did not reflect the expectations of the reading approach/skills need in Higher Education

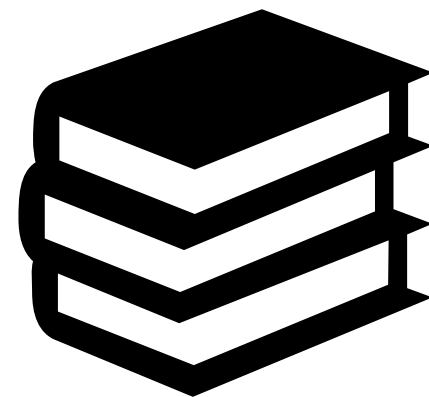
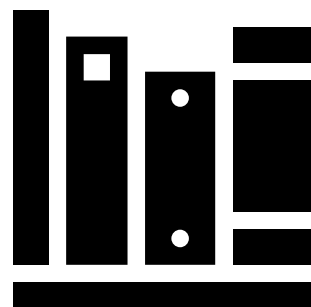
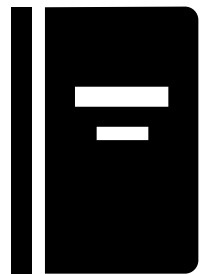
How and why was this research developed?

Earlier research at the University of Worcester (Malomo, 2017) highlighted that students often:

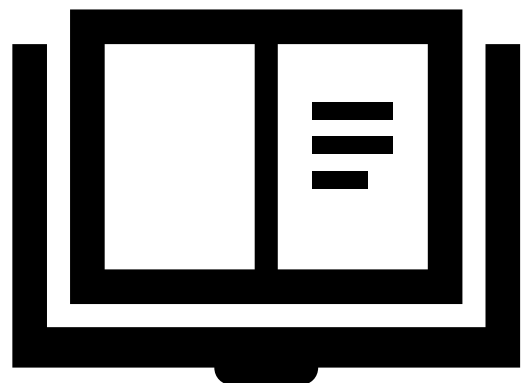
- *perceive reading as a pleasurable, nostalgic activity of their childhood*
- *Don't understand that "reading for your degree" means reading!*



What are the barriers that students might experience around reading?



STUDENT





Demographics of student body within the research project

74% are mature students

97% are female

Qualifications on entry

- 29% entry with A levels
- 55% enter with a variety of vocational qualifications

45% of students have an IMD count 1-2 (25% in overall student body)

50% have a POLAR score of 1-2 on entry (27% in overall student body)



Universal Design for Learning

Anticipatory Adjustments – DMU Universal Design for Learning

Equal



Equitable



**This is making reasonable
adjustments to barriers to learning**



How did we try to
remove barriers to
reading?



We wanted to link
audiobooks in our
Resource (reading)
Lists.

This is not without its
problems!



NV Access

Empowering lives through
non-visual access to technology



Spreed - speed read the web

Offered by: spreed.launchrock.com

★★★★★ 713 | Productivity | 82,883 users

ZAP READER
zapreader is a free service. pdf

Instead we added
accessibility tools to our
[Resource Lists](#)

ATbar





What does this look like in practice?

Top tools to support you in completing your reading

There are lots of strategies and methods to engage with literature. You may prefer to curl up with a print book in the library, scroll through an ebook on your laptop in a cafe, or set up a Text to Speech player while you cook at home. You may find that you want to read different items in different ways at different times - there is no one way of reading, so feel free to experiment to find what works for you.

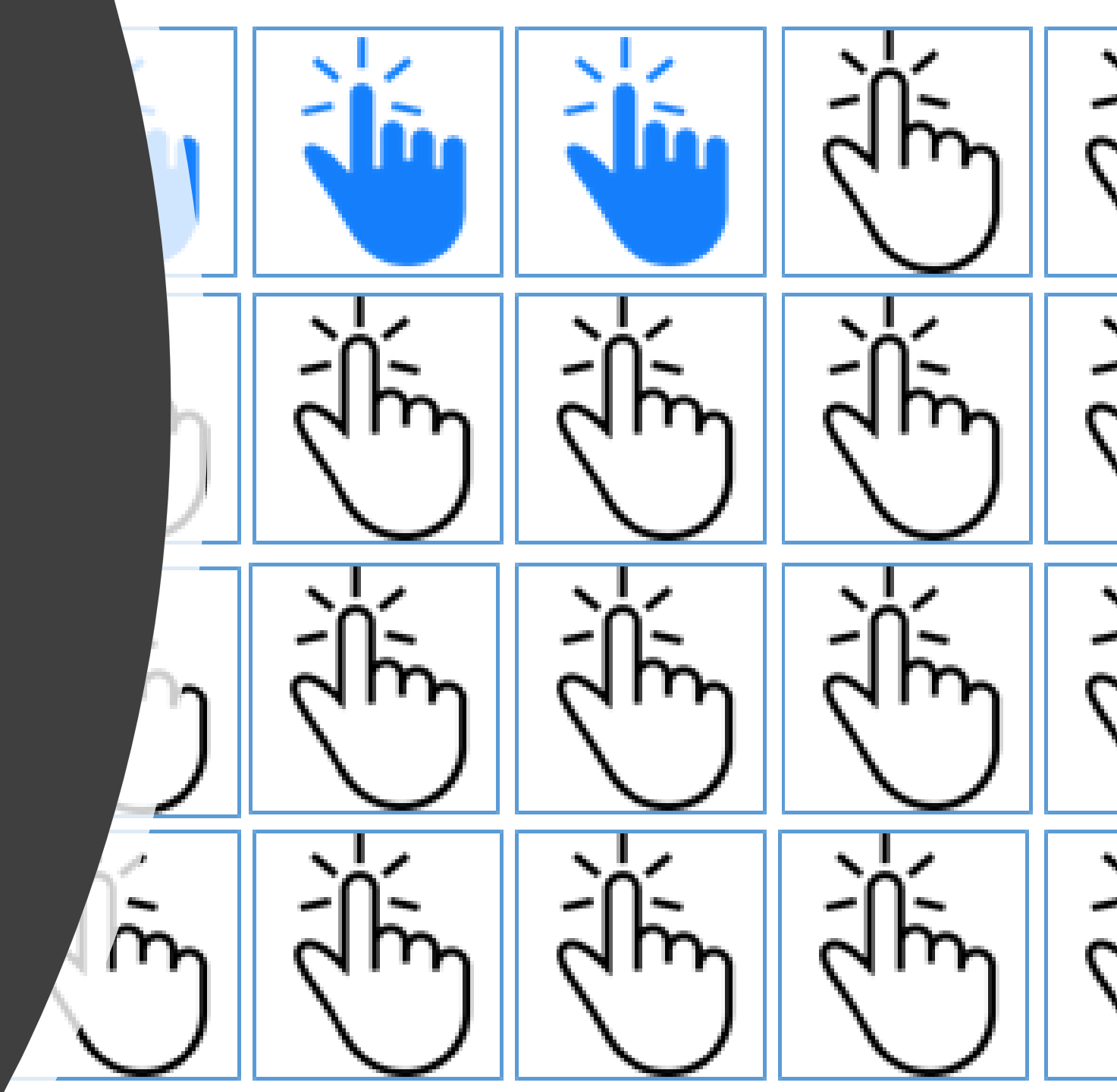
Here you will find a short list of recommended tools that can enhance your use of electronic books, journals and other resources. These specific tools generally work best using smart browsers like Google Chrome, but all browsers will have a range of options available. This list is far from exhaustive! You are encourage to explore other options and feedback what works well (and less well) for you to help this list develop.

Do you find reading from a screen to be difficult or uncomfortable? Use 'ATBar' to adjust your settings. ATBar is a free toolbar you can add to any web browser, and has lots to offer for everyone. You can change font style and size, add a colour overlay to reduce screen glare, and use the Text to Speech function to listen to your reading, as well as a dictionary and spellchecker, both handily embedded. Click on the links below for more about how this tool could support you alongside easy to use instructions.

	ATbar (download) Webpage	VIEW ONLINE	<input type="radio"/>	
	ATbar (instructions) Webpage	VIEW ONLINE	<input type="radio"/>	

Did it work?

We had 30 clicks on these tools in 2018/19 out of a cohort of around 200



Methods that were used within the research

Focus group made up of
academics who teach
on the programme,
capturing responses on
a Padlet

Online survey for
students



Who were the focus group ?



Group of lecturers who teach on the
FdA Early Years (0-8)

Both experienced and new lecturers

All teaching on the course in
Partnership Colleges in the West
Midlands, Herefordshire, Worcester and
through our flexible and distributed
route



Voice of the focus group

Themes that emerged

- Accessibility tools
- Reading plans
- Embedding reading expectations within teaching

Voices of the academics - *accessibility tools*

- The need to be a super user
- Perceived problems with the tools
- Lack of confidence around use especially within the resource list - more training needed




Voices of
academics –
accessibility tools
& audiobooks

*"the spoken word is a
different set of skills
to following a novel being
read aloud - is there any
research on this?"*

“Students are developing a different approach to reading as ebooks and pdfs enable the identification of specific words in texts, therefore they can 'speed read' for references rather than reading sections or chapters”


“Most of the time students think they have to read every book from cover to cover”

”



Voices of academics
—curiosity
seemed the
solution

"Considering my current students, I think curiosity is the key; I can see students whose curiosity lead [sic] them to read a whole article and follow it up with further research - they are 'thirsty for knowledge' rather than just reading for assignments"



Ideas and suggestions from the focus group

"Time for all tutors to read for themselves specific chapters and then discuss with other tutors teaching the same modules as to how a piece could support certain topics, thus spreading the load"

"The purpose is to help students recognise that reading needs to be planned in the same way as assignment writing"

Voice of the students

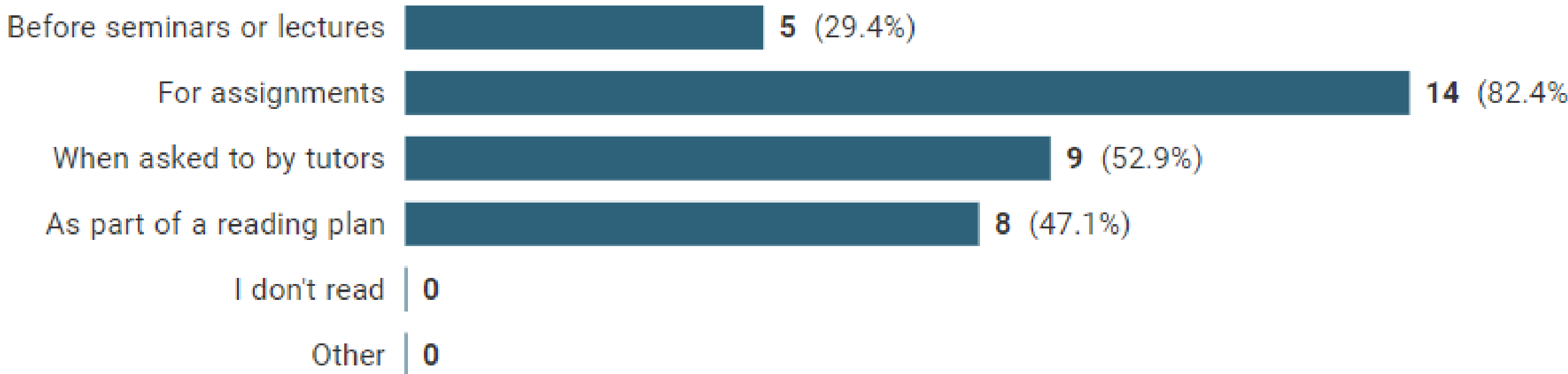
Themes that emerged:

- Reading & learning
- Accessibility tools
- Barriers & constraints

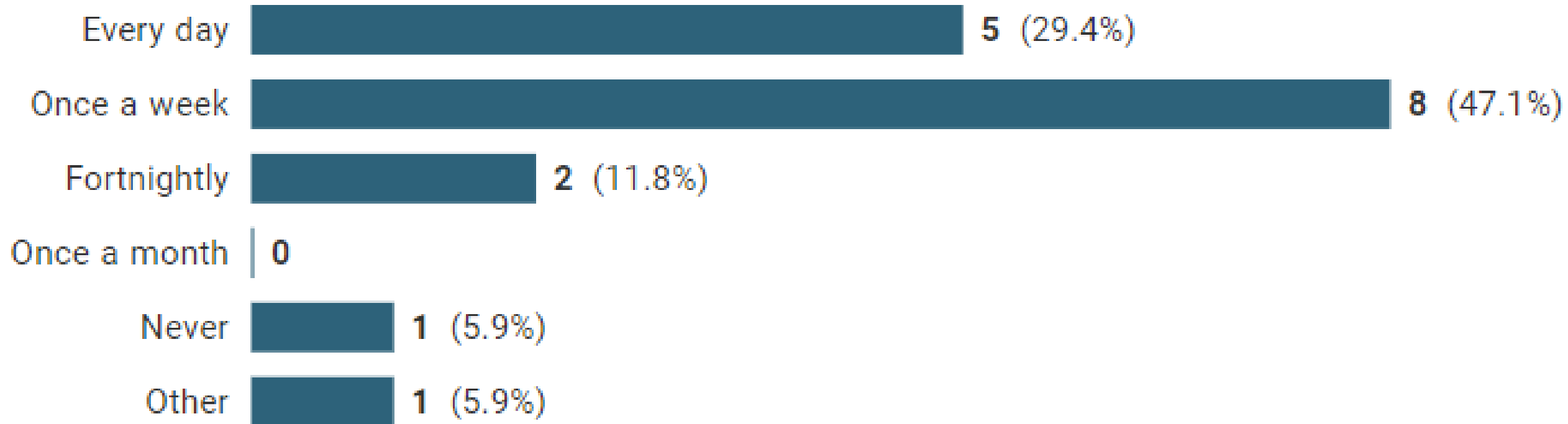


Reading & learning

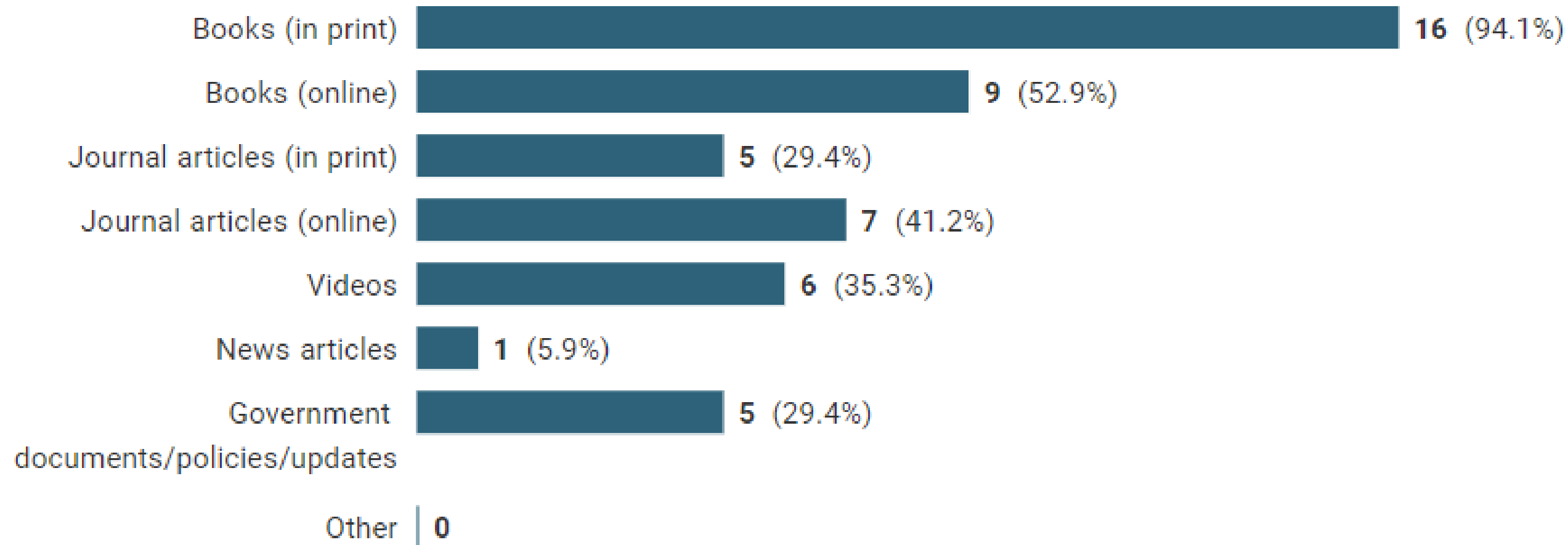
When do you use your Resource List?



How often do you use your Resource List?



Which are your top 3 resource types to use?



Accessibility tools



24% said they'd definitely noticed accessibility tools in their Resource Lists; 24% weren't sure



One student used NV Access and said **“It has helped me to gain more knowledge for the uni [sic] that I was reading up on”**



52% would definitely try audiobooks if they were available and another 18% might

Barriers & constraints: “how do you feel about reading for your course?”



47% don't have enough time to read



30% said reading is hard



35% felt nervous about understanding



18% felt unsure about what to read



30% felt unsure about how much to read



BUT 47% also said they enjoy reading



Voice of the
students

“Sometimes it is enjoyable but other times I don't know the purpose of why I am reading something and/or exactly what I am supposed to get from the reading”



Reflections and
implications

So
What?

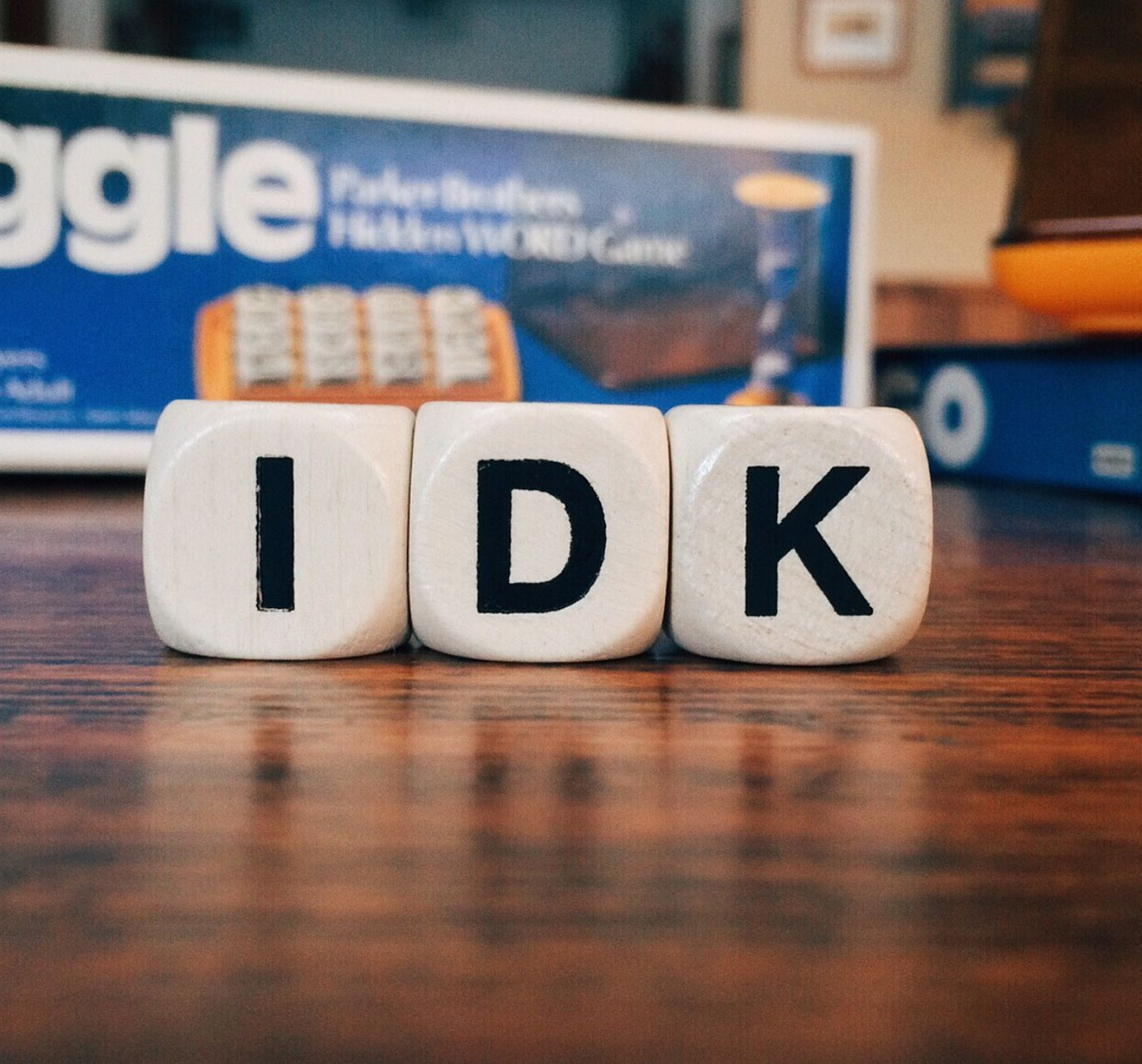
Implications for the teaching team - the insider

- A change is needed in the pedagogical approach to ensure that reading is explicit
- An understanding of UDL principles and how they can support the removal of barriers
- Developing staff skills in using all online platforms that support all students to access materials
- Further engagement with librarians to support and develop an intrinsic approach to reading



An abstract graphic featuring three large, overlapping circles. The top-left circle is orange, the bottom-left circle is yellow, and the right circle is blue. The circles have a thin white border and are set against a light gray background. The blue circle on the right contains the text "Implications for librarians" in white.

Implications for
librarians



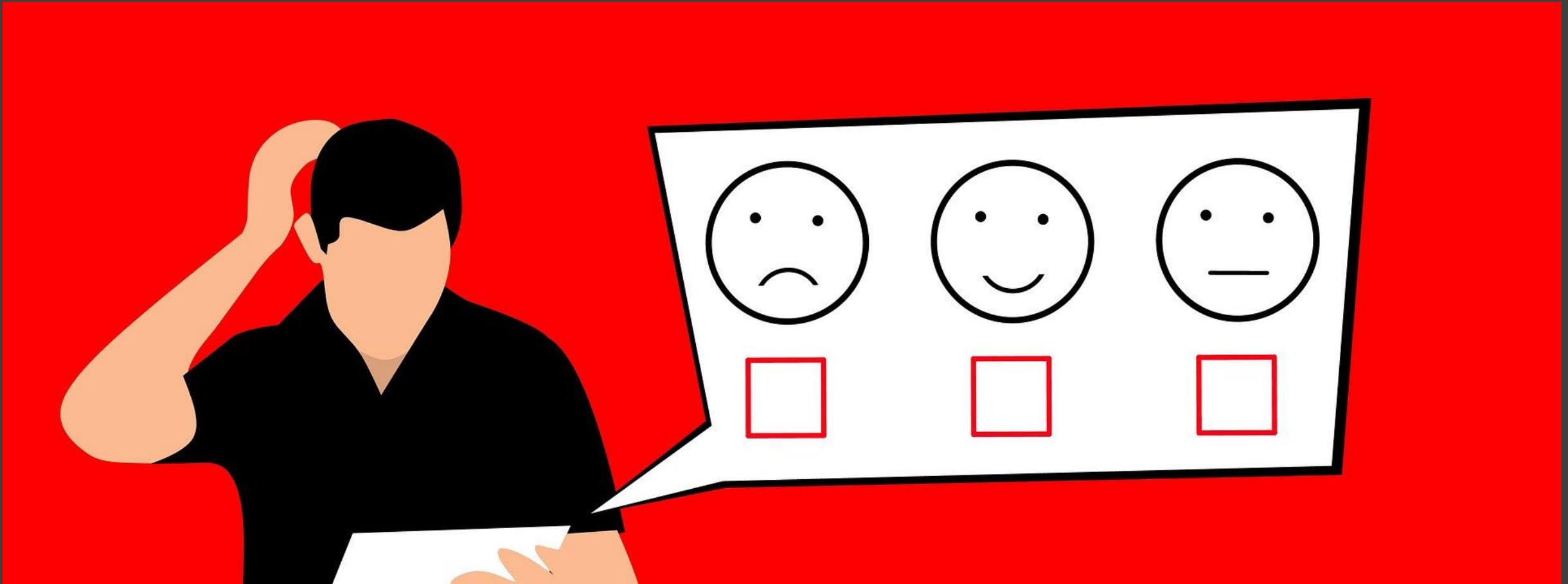
There is a challenge
for UDL
practitioners
around student
preferences for
print vs ebooks



We need to add
to or change our
teaching

But who teaches
academic staff?

Implications for publishers & systems vendors



Make systems
easy and
intuitive to use

I.e. make them work with third party tools like
screen-readers and/or have in-built tools to do
the same job



We're still interested in the idea of audiobooks – but we'd need a publishing partner to run a pilot...



But what
about the
students?

Want to know more? Get in touch!

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